The Resurrection of the Body

by Father Justin McCann, M.A.

Introduction

Professor Saintsbury of Edinburgh said in reviewing the influence of the scholastic philosophers of the thirteenth century in his volume, The *Flourishing of Romance*, "whatever else they were they were thorough, and whatever they could not do they could think." I know no subject with regard to which this is better illustrated than the scholastic discussion of the problem and mystery of the resurrection. Aquinas emphasizes the fact that; "Addition is made from without to the stature of a boy without prejudice to his identity, for the boy and the adult are numerically the same man," and that therefore "what does not bar numerical unity in a man while he lives on uninterruptedly clearly can be no bar to the identity of the arisen man with the man that was." The child and the man are very different both as regards the material particles and the amount of them that make up their bodies and yet they are identically the same person. During the forty years between birth and maturity, in spite of the constant change going on, there is a certain very definite sense in which they are possessed of the same body. On this principle of Aquinas Reverend Dr. Smith has discussed the resurrection of the body in this little volume and has made it most interesting.

In recent years, that is, since the war, and above all during the present decade, there has been a great change in view with regard to scholasticism. At the end of the nineteenth century, as for several centuries before so far as English speaking educated people were concerned, it was the custom to make fun of it and to make little of it. Only those who know it at second hand do so any more. A whole group of professors of philosophy in this and in other countries have ‘become deeply interested in scholasticism and are quite willing to admit, and indeed have come to recognize very clearly, that these old philosophers thought deeply about the most important problems that humanity has to face and that no one can afford to neglect the products of their thinking.

Nothing that I know constitutes a better or a simpler way of seeing how deeply scholastic philosophers thought than to read this discussion of the problem of the resurrection as Reverend Dr. Smith

sums it up. The creeds of all Christian churches contain the article, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," which is the absolute teaching, and yet it is surprising what a number of subsidiary questions which arise from the doctrine are not discussed from any dogmatic standpoint, and what an abundance of room is left for legitimate variety of view with regard to the question of the nature of the identity between the earthly and the risen body.

The breadth of Church tolerance in what may well be called a fundamental question as well as the depth of the thinking of the scholastics are both exemplified in this tract on the resurrection. It has taken on a new significance now that the physicists are defining matter in terms of electricity, that is, declaring matter to be a mode of force, and yet the old-fashioned explanations worked out by the medieval scholastic philosophers fit in with the very latest science.

- James J Walsh, M.D.

Introductory

"I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting." - The Apostles' Creed

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is an integral part of Catholic belief concerning the Last Things - that is, concerning death and the life after death. It is so intimate a part of this belief that to reject it is to reject a doctrine which was taught from the very beginning of Christianity, and which has been unalterably affirmed by the Church throughout the centuries. While other elements in Catholic belief concerning the Last Things have emerged only gradually into full clearness and obtained precise definition relatively late as, for instance, the doctrine of purgatory - this element, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, is explicit from the outset, and has not been subject to the Catholic process of development. By this assertion it is not meant that the doctrine has not been contested and contradicted, for it became at an early date a subject of acute controversy within the Christian body. But notwithstanding such controversy, the faith of the Church has been plain throughout, and that faith has been a simple acceptance of the doctrine in its obvious sense.

The assertion that has just been made may easily be misunderstood. It may seem, that is, to be in conflict with the theological history of the doctrine, and to be belied by the fact that the theologians are not in perfect agreement in their exposition of it. The solution is to be found in a necessary distinction. In every doctrine we may distinguish between the doctrine itself, so to say the substance or core of the dogma, and the many subsidiary questions which may arise concerning its mode of realization and application. Catholic theology, for example, is explicit in its general statement of the truths which concern the life after death; but it is not dogmatic beyond the warrant of the faith once given to the saints, and it refrains from much detailed assertion. So is it in particular with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. About the fact of that resurrection, and that a bodily resurrection, Catholic theology has no doubts and there is no controversy; but about subsidiary questions which arise from the doctrine - as, for instance; the

question of the nature of the identity which obtains between the earthly and the risen body - about such questions Catholic theology is not dogmatic, and there is room for a legitimate variety of view. In rough and summary antithesis the matter may be stated thus, that there are these two distinct things, the fact of the resurrection of the body and the manner of this resurrection. Now about the fact of the resurrection there is no question: it is a revealed doctrine, set forth in unmistakable fashion in Scripture and tradition, and taught by the divine authority of the Church. But about the manner of the resurrection, on the other hand, there has always been, and there will probably always be, some variety of theological speculation. In the course of these chapters some account will be given of this speculation, and an effort will be made to set forth the state of theological opinion in the matter. But it is important that the reader should not mistake the situation and conclude from this variety of opinion that the doctrine itself is indeterminate and uncertain. In the Apostles' Creed we say: "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting." In the Nicene Creed that is used in the Mass: "And I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the: world to come." ‘There is the substance of our faith, the fact of the bodily resurrection; the further question regarding the manner of the resurrection - How shall this thing be? - is subsidiary and relatively unimportant.

This distinction having been made; it is necessary now to explain the character and scope of the argument which this book will set forth. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is a revealed doctrine, and in its acceptance we exercise faith. Although a reasonable doctrine, it is not a deduction from reasoning; it cannot be established by reason, nor can it be disproved by reason. The fact which the doctrine asserts is a miraculous fact, and as such beyond the scope of natural reason. The doctrine is simply part of the deposit of the faith. When, therefore, we profess our belief in it, we are professing our belief in a revealed doctrine, We are accepting the testimony of God and making an act of divine faith. That point is primary, and from that point our argument must start. In the course of these pages we shall adduce the testimony of Holy Scripture and of tradition to show that it is part of revelation; we shall also consider presently what natural reason may urge in support of the doctrine; but throughout, in the end as in the

beginning, we have before us an unmistakable revealed doctrine, and our effort is in fact confined to exposition and explanation; no attempt is made to prove that which is in effect unprovable.

The subject of these chapters falls naturally into three main divisions, corresponding to three principal questions. First there is the fact of the bodily resurrection, secondly there is the question of the identity of the risen body with the earthly body, and thirdly there is the question of the character of the risen body. In dealing with the first question we are in the region of dogma: the bodily resurrection is an article of faith. In dealing with the other two we are largely in the region of theological deduction and speculation. Much of this deduction will appear necessary and inevitable, if we are to hold the doctrine at all; while some of it has no such necessity. The matter is obscure and defies exploration. Let the judicious reader understand, therefore, that he is not asked to give the assent of faith to any such deduction or speculation, but solely to the doctrine itself.

The Position and Meaning of the Doctrine

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body holds an important position in the Christian scheme of the life after death, and it will be well, before proceeding further, to determine its exact position in that scheme. The Catechism, in the familiar summary, speaks of Four Last Things: death, judgement, hell and heaven. There is in this summary no explicit mention of the resurrection of the body, although it is implied. Where, then, it may be asked, does the resurrection of the body come in, and what is its relation to the other members of this summary? A brief outline of the whole matter will serve to make this clear.

When a man dies his body is laid in the grave and goes to corruption; but his soul, the spiritual part of him, is not buried with his body. It is immortal - death can have no power over it - and it enters at once, or rather continues in, its everlasting life. What happens to it when it is separated from the body and becomes a disembodied spirit? It goes immediately, in the instant of its release, before the judgement seat of God for the particular judgement. There it is judged, and there, according to its merits, it receives its judgement and is assigned to its eternal lot. If the man have died in a state of grace, without any stain of sin upon him or any debt of punishment unpaid, then the soul hears the happy summons, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," (Matthew 25:34) and enters into the joy of its Lord in that vision of the intellect and fruition of the will which is the supreme happiness of the rational creature. If the man have died in mortal sin, then the soul hears the terrible words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels," (Matthew 25:41) and is banished at once to the pains of hell. But if the man have died in yet a third condition, so that he is indeed in a state of grace, but has still to atone for venial sin and to expiate forgiven sin, then the soul is dismissed to purgatory and there remains until its purification is accomplished and it is ready to be admitted to the Vision of God.

Now, so far, it will be noticed, we have been writing the history of

the disembodied soul; we have not yet encountered the resurrection. It may be that many, as they think vaguely and indistinctly about death and the particular judgement, suppose in some loose fashion that this process of the soul could be termed "resurrection." But plainly it cannot be so denominated. The soul does not die, the soul therefore cannot rise again; and if there were no more than this to the matter, then we could not use the term resurrection; and the doctrine would be without meaning. But there is more than this to the matter; the history of man's last end is not yet complete. Hitherto we have considered only the history of an individual man and the fact of the particular judgement; to this we have to add the history of the last end of the human race and the fact of the general judgement. For when the last day comes, at a time that is known only to God and fixed in his eternal decree, the whole of mankind is summoned to the judgement seat for the great Assize of the general judgement.

But before the general judgement there comes the miracle of the general resurrection. It is here, therefore, at this precise point in man's secular history, that our doctrine applies. Here is the exact position of the resurrection of the body. At that last day all the dead will rise again to stand before the judgement seat. The souls of men will be reunited to their bodies. The particular judgement will be reaffirmed and ratified. Henceforth the complete man - soul and body - in full and perfect unity of nature, will undergo his lot of eternal bliss or eternal pain.

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Such, then, if we may so term it, is the historical setting of the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. Such is the hope which the doctrine enshrines. It is a doctrine which implies that simple and elementary philosophy whereby we regard ourselves as creatures composed of body and soul: of a material body and a spiritual substance which is the vital principle of the body. It is a doctrine which supposes that man remains finally, in the after-life as in the present life, a being of body and soul; and it implies that such an immortality, not of soul only, but of body and soul, is the proper and natural immortality for man. Pagan philosophers and heretics in all times, emphasizing the spiritual part of man and despising

and rejecting the body, have formulated another sort of immortality, which men should enjoy as disembodied spirits, released from the "prison-house" or "tomb" of the body and set free from its supposed degrading company. Ancient mythology conceived an after-life in which man became a frail and ineffective wraith; and something of the sort seems to be indicated by the highly dubious communications of modern spiritualism. But Christianity, taking a more complete and saner view, considers both body and soul as necessary to the full and perfect man; and therefore believes in an after-life wherein body and soul are once again united.

They are so united again after the painful separation which is death. The body is laid in the grave and dissolves by natural process so as to be indistinguishable from the earth around it. But such physical dissolution presents no obstacle to the omnipotence of God. No physical law or natural process can be invoked to explain the act of his omnipotence. His fiat goes forth, and the body that was dissolved into its elements is reproduced, endowed again with physical life and reunited with its soul. What manner of physical continuity, of identity of matter, obtains between the earthly and the risen body is a question that shall be touched on later. For the present it is enough to set forth the meaning and reality of the bodily rising, and to emphasize its single cause, the omnipotence of the Creator.

The Bodily Resurrection Reasonable

Christian theology professes a larger and more complete view of the nature of man than that held by pagan or heretic. Nor is the Church disposed to abandon that theology because certain modern philosophers would revive the views of Plato or the Manicheans. The Christian theology holds that man was created a complete unity of body and soul, and that no mere accidental connexion, but a close substantial union. In this creation, furthermore, by the grace of God, he enjoyed a perfect balance of his powers and faculties, the body being the perfect partner and docile instrument of the soul, and endowed with immortality. And so would man have remained, in an everlasting life uninterrupted by death, had not sin intervened. But sin came, the balance of man's nature was upset, and there came also the penalty of death to dissolve the union of soul and body. Yet not finally and for ever. Sin was expiated by the death of the Redeemer, and our resurrection achieved in his Resurrection. So the separation of death was not final. Body and soul were to be united once more, and that for eternity.

To such a theology, therefore, the body is not a prison-house or tomb, in which the soul is confined for a time, and from which it gladly makes its escape; but it is a real part of the man, united with the soul to form one perfect being. This union of the soul and body, says Saint Thomas Aquinas, is a natural union, and so close is the union of the two that human nature dreads and shrinks from their separation. "The loss of the bodily life is naturally horrible to human nature." (*Summa*, III, Q. xlvi, a. 6.) They are wrenched asunder violently in the agony of death. But, says Saint Thomas again, "It is contrary to the nature of the soul to be without the body; and, since nothing that is contrary to nature can endure, therefore the soul will not be for ever without the body. Now the soul lasts for ever, and so it must be conjoined again with the body. That is the resurrection. Therefore the immortality of the soul would appear to demand the resurrection of the body." (*Contra Gentiles*, IV, 79.)

Such is the spirit of the Christian philosophy. The liberal theologian may alter the natural meaning of the doctrine and maintain that the

resurrection which Christians are bound to believe is no more than an immortality of soul. He may declare, for example, that "the form which the doctrine of the resurrection assumes in my mind is the survival of death by a personality which has shed its physical integument for ever." (H. D. A. Major, *A Resurrection of Relics* (1922), p. 90.) It appears to him that that is a simplification, and that the doctrine is thus made easy to the modern mind. But such a simplification not only empties the doctrine of its meaning - for such a persistence of the personal life in a purely spiritual mode of existence has no just right to the name of resurrection - it is also out of accord with the spirit of Christianity. The central doctrine of the Christian faith is that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, not despising the Virgin's womb, became man and took a human body - *et Verbum caro factum est.* And that faith is only consistent with itself when it refuses to despise and reject the body, and claims for it a share in the eternal hope. If God so honoured our humanity, what right have we to despise it? What philosophy can excuse us for attempting to improve upon the nature which has been given to us?

And the Christian theology, which has the Incarnation for its central dogma, is incarnational throughout its whole extent. Hence the liturgy and ritual of the Church, hence, above all, the sacraments. Man is not regarded. as a pure spirit, but regarded always and treated as a unity of spirit and body. By visible and tangible means does God work his benefits towards him, and he uses always the visible and tangible body. The body is consecrated and sanctified by prayer and sacrament, and the apostle bids us remember that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Obviously the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is necessary and inevitable to such a philosophy.

Saint Thomas Aquinas argues further that the reunion of body and soul is necessary for ultimate felicity. Without the body the soul lacks something, and to that extent its felicity is imperfect. Just as any part dissociated from the whole to which it belongs is incomplete and imperfect, so the disembodied soul is incomplete by itself and requires the restoration of the integral human nature. And this restoration, this ultimate redintegration, is very suitable on other grounds. For body and soul have lived and worked together;

whatever the man has done or suffered, he has done or suffered as a whole; body and soul have shared indissolubly and indiscriminately in all the passages of his mortal life. It is right, therefore, and fitting that body and soul should share the eternal issue of that life, whether this be everlasting joy or everlasting pain.

"Ah, wretched body," cries the preacher; "too often have I had to complain of thy burden and of thy exigencies. But, if I have used thee to dishonour my life in the eyes of God and of men, I have used thee also to rehabilitate myself. I have used thy knees to prostrate myself before the sacred Majesty which I have offended, thy ears to hear the merciful words that have given me back hope again, thy eyes to weep for my faults, thy breast to sigh and groan in my repentance, thy mouth to utter the lamentations and thanksgivings of my wretchedness, and all thy senses and all thy powers to acquire that knowledge and virtue and to perform those good works which have brought me near to God and made me worthy of him. And must I then bid thee good-bye for ever?

"O soul and body! Was the love which united you two, spirit and matter, in a single life and a single activity, nothing but a deceit and a lie? Must that divine marriage, which set you to share so intimately in all actions and in all merits, be dishonoured by an eternal divorce? - No, no, that cannot be! That community of actions and of merits demands a community of reward and punishment. And since there is not in this world either pleasure or pain which suffices for the reward of the just or the chastisement of the wicked, I must believe in the restoration and reconstitution of that human unity which is broken by death; I must believe in the resurrection of the body." (Monsabré, *La Résurrection* (Caréme, 1889))

The preacher in these words gives utterance to the natural instinct of our humanity, which everywhere and always has desired this complete immortality. And natural desire and instinctive feeling are not things to be despised and rejected. Although they do not establish the doctrine, yet they persuade it and confirm it. For our human nature is from God, and at its purest and best prepares us for the teachings of its divine Creator.

We therefore regard that philosophy as inadequate and that

spiritualism as one-sided and false which despise the body and would allow it no lot or share in the eternal life. There is a delusive simplicity about the theory of those who would have an immortality of spirit alone; but simplicity is no guarantee of truth, and it often means a partial and incomplete synthesis. Saint Thomas had to answer those who maintained that were we to become pure spirits without any admixture of body, we should become more like to God and better imitate his perfection. His answer is that there may be thus a closer superficial likeness, but that substantially and really a being is more conformable to the perfection of God when it eternally expresses the divine idea according to which it was created, and when there is nothing lacking to the completeness of its nature, just as there is nothing lacking to the nature of God.

The Bodily Resurrection Miraculous

But although the resurrection of the body be a reasonable doctrine, and although it would seem to be demanded by our human nature and by any complete philosophy of that human nature, yet the resurrection is in the fullest sense a miraculous event. Many objections have been raised against the doctrine, and are still being raised against it. It is not an easy doctrine. But we both admit this difficulty and supply its adequate solution, when we set it down that the resurrection is miraculous. For a miracle is an event which transcends the power of natural causes and is due to the direct action of the omnipotence of God. It is not an event which is in conflict with natural law, as involving in itself a philosophical contradiction, but an event which passes beyond natural causality and requires omnipotence. If the bodily resurrection involved any contradiction, then it could not take place, even by the power of God. But if it involves no such contradiction, and is in no way contrary to natural law, but only beyond the scope of our experience, then the bodily resurrection cannot be declared scientifically impossible. With God all things are possible.

If it be said, for instance, that the discoveries of science regarding the constitution of matter and its behaviour make a resurrection of body inconceivable, it may be answered, first, that science has not yet made up its mind about the constitution of matter, and secondly, that the conclusions of science, whatever they may ultimately be, canno really affect the case. For, if the bodily resurrection be a dogmatic truth, guaranteed by the authority of God, here is a piece of knowledge which science could never reach and which it is not in a position to criticize. So that the scientific difficulties commonly alleged against the doctrine are seen to be, when we realize its miraculous character, irrelevant and ineffective.

Some of the difficulties raised against the resurrection of the body are really concerned rather with the mode than with the fact of this resurrection: they are pertinent especially when we seek to determine the identity that obtains between the earthly and the risen body, but they do not touch the core of the doctrine - i.e., the revitalizing of dead matter and its reunion to the soul. Physical

science may fairly say that this is a phenomenon which lies outside its experience, but it cannot say that it is impossible or incredible. So that the essence of the doctrine - i.e., the teaching that men will rise again with true bodies - this is independent of any scientific theory regarding the constitution or behaviour of matter, or any physiological hypothesis; and cannot be affected by such. It is difficult, of course, to imagine the reconstitution of the body after the dissolution of death, for no such process does or can come within our experience, or can possibly become a phenomenon which physical science may study. But the doctrine does not stand or fall by the limitations of our experience, nor does it imply that the resurrection is in any respect a physical process. On the contrary, the fact is removed beyond the range of our experience, it is regarded as definitely miraculous, it is attributed to the omnipotence of God as to its only and sufficient cause.

Such is the fundamental attitude of Catholic theology. That theology teaches quite simply and plainly that the resurrection of the body is a wholly miraculous fact, not to be explained by the operation of natural causes. There is nothing which can be called a casual continuity between the earthly body and the risen body. There is not, as Origen suggested, a reproductive germ. in the dead body out of which the risen body develops. The resurrection is to be conceived, therefore, not as a process of generation under natural causes, but as a direct reproduction of the body by the power of God. The Resurrection is therefore in the strictest sense miraculous.

Saint Thomas Aquinas sets forth this teaching in plain terms. Asking whether the resurrection of Christ is the cause of our resurrection, (Suppl. Q. lxxvi, 2. i.) he answers that the direct cause of our resurrection is the power of God, which effected also our Lord's Resurrection. But inasmuch as all divine gifts come to us through the merits of Christ, so may we say that Christ's Resurrection is the cause of our resurrection. His Resurrection, further, is the exemplar and model of ours. Proceeding; in the second and third Articles of the same Question, he discusses the efficacy of other alleged causes, only to insist that nothing but the power of God is the direct and adequate cause of the resurrection.

Moreover, much as Saint Thomas holds that soul and body belong

naturally together, and that their reunion in the resurrection restores the integrity of human nature, yet he will not allow that that reunion is "natural" - i.e., the effect of natural process - for there is no natural process from death to life. So that although the body may be said to have a certain passive inclination towards reunion with the soul, there is in nature no active principle which can cause the resurrection, and therefore the resurrection must be preternatural - i.e., miraculous. (Supp. Q. lxxv, a. 3.)

Holding, then, that the resurrection of the body is a miraculous event, an effective exercise of the omnipotence of God, we shall not be disposed to set any limits of human imagination to God's power, or to confine it within the bounds of natural causality. As Saint Paul asked: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8) And the Fathers, on their part, are content thus to refer the objector to the infinite power of the Creator. Here, for example, is the argument of Saint Augustine:

"Therefore, brother, confirm yourself in the name and help of him in whom you believe; so as to withstand the tongues of those who mock at our faith, out of whose mouths the devil speaks seductive words, desiring especially to ridicule the belief in the resurrection. But from your own experience, perceiving that you now exist although you once were not, believe that you will exist hereafter. For where was this mass of your body, and where was this form and structure of your members a few years ago, before you were born? Did it not come forth to light, out of the secret places of creation, under the invisible formative power of God? Is it then in any way a difficult thing for God to restore this quality of your body as it was, seeing that he was able to make it formerly when it was not?" (*De catechizandis rudibus*, c. 25 abbreviated.)

This general answer to the objections raised against any resurrection of body will appear comprehensive enough, and, if its assumptions be granted, quite complete and decisive. It is the general answer of Catholic theology, basing itself upon the nature of God and upon his revelation. It may seem, indeed, that when we have so stated the matter, there remains no more to be said. But that is not so. It has yet to be seen that we are justified in regarding this doctrine as a revealed truth, and as such contained in the

double source of Scripture and tradition. And, moreover, the doctrine has yet to be explained and defended in one very important particular, namely, the identity of the risen body with the body which we now bear. But this is matter for a later chapter.

The Testimony of Holy Scripture in General

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is set before us by the Church as an article of our faith, and that is sufficient for us so that we may give it full credence. Nevertheless, we are doing the will of the Church if we examine and consider the testimonies to her teaching which are contained in the sources of revelation. What are these sources? They are Holy Scripture and tradition. By Scripture we mean the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments; by tradition we mean that body of doctrine which is contained in the Creeds of the Church, in the definitions of the Councils, in the writings of the Fathers and in the constant teaching of the living Church. In the present chapter let us consider the general testimony of Holy Scripture to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

And first the testimony of the Old Testament. It may be said at the outset - and it is only natural - that we should be unreasonable to expect an absolutely explicit testimony to the doctrine in the books of the Old Testament. The revelation of the Old Testament was to be completed by the New, and in no one point did it need completion so much as in the doctrine of the life after death. For Jewish belief on this point was largely vague and indeterminate. Yet there are testimonies scattered throughout the Bible which imply the belief in the resurrection, and these we shall now set out.

The texts which are usually adduced are four in number. First comes the text of Isaias (Isaiah 26:19-21): "Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again . . . the earth shall disclose her blood and shall cover her slain no more." Then there are the words of the Book of Job (Job 19:25-27): "I know that my redeemer liveth and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin: and in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall see and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Next are the words of the Book of Daniel (Daniel 12:2): "And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some unto life everlasting and others unto reproach, to see it always." And finally there is the text of 2 Machabees (2 Machabees 7:10-11): "After him the third was

made a mocking-stock, and when he was required he quickly put forth his tongue and courageously stretched out his hands, and said with confidence: These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God I now despise them: because I hope to receive them again from him."

Of these four testimonies it is well to say that only the last is quite explicit and satisfactory. The passage from Job loses some of its force when the version which we have given is compared with the original Hebrew, and the texts of Isaias and Daniel do not clearly prove a general resurrection. This is to take the texts just as they stand and without making any allowance for subsequent Catholic interpretation. But considering their subsequent history in Christian use, we find that these Old Testament testimonies, and especially the text of Job, were used by the earliest Christian writers as direct proof of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The words of Job are thus used by Saint Clement of Rome in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 26:3) and by a long sequence of Fathers. In virtue of this passage Job figures in early Christian art as a prophet of the resurrection. His words found a place in the ancient liturgies, and they are still embodied in the Office for the Dead. So if we believe - as we must - that the Spirit of God watches over the Church, guiding her teaching, and that she is the authoritative exponent of the Word of God, we naturally find in these texts a real, though obscure, enunciation of the doctrine.

Turning now from the Old Testament to the New, we pass from comparative obscurity to clear day. During the last century B.C. Jewish thought was much occupied with the question of the life after death, and a considerable quantity of apocryphal writing has come down to us which endeavors to solve the problems of the after-life. In our Lord's time also, as is clear from the Gospels, the Jews were deeply interested in this question, and it was even a chief subject of controversy among them. So when our Lord, from his divine knowledge, propounded a clear doctrine concerning the after-life, his audiences heard him eagerly and debated his teaching warmly. The Sadducees, that party among the Jews who refused to believe in a resurrection, naturally contested his teaching, and it is especially in answer to their objections that he made his doctrine plain.

We read in Saint Matthew's Gospel how the Sadducees, "who say there is no resurrection," came to our Lord and put before him the case of a woman who was married successively to seven men. ‘At the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven shall she be? for they all had her. And Jesus answering said to them: You err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married: but shall be as the angels of God in heaven. And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God saying to you: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:23-32; cf. Mark 12:18-27, Luke 20:27-38)

In the Gospel of Saint John we find ice explicit texts. After our Lord had healed the infirm man at the pool of Bethsaida, he speaks to the Jews in defence and explanation of his work and teaching. They marvelled at his healing the infirm man, but he says to them: "Wonder not at this, for th¢ hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. Ad they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgement." (John 5:28-29) After the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, when he discourses upon the bread of life, we have this further testimony: "Now this is the will of the Father who sent me: that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day. And this is the will of my Father that sent me: that everyone who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day." (John 6:39-40) And finally, from Saint John, we have our Lord's words at the raising of Lazarus. When Martha came to him and expostulated with him for his absence, Jesus replied: "Thy brother shall rise again." To this Martha answers: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." But Martha wanted a present resurrection and not the remote resurrection of the last day. Before granting her prayer, our Lord, to purify her faith, speaks these words: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me although he be dead shall live: and everyone that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die for ever." (John 11:23-26)

From these passages of the Gospels, taken in their obvious sense

and with proper appreciation of their context, it is clear that our Lord taught the resurrection of the dead in the plain and ordinary sense of that phrase - that is, a resurrection by which the living man is reconstituted in the everlasting life in the integrity of his human nature, body as well as soul. That was what the resurrection meant to his contemporaries, those Jews who so warmly debated it among themselves. That was the sort of resurrection exemplified in our Lord's own miracles, when he raised the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son of Naim, and Lazarus. That was the power given to his apostles in the commission: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely you have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8) Throughout the Gospels, throughout the New Testament, "raising the dead" means nothing less than this bodily resurrection, a real restoration of physical life. Some opponents of this bodily resurrection would have it, because the phrase "resurrection of the body" does not occur in the New Testament, that therefore they may interpret the resurrection in a purely spiritual sense. But this is bad exegesis. It is bad exegesis because it takes the phrase "resurrection of the dead" out of its context and gives it a meaning at variance with that context. Of the doctrine of a purely spiritual resurrection there is no hint in the New Testament.

So far we have considered the specific teaching of the Gospels concerning the doctrine, but have not considered the most striking evidence for the doctrine which is contained in these same Gospels - namely, the evidence of the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of our Lord himself. As was suggested in a previous chapter of this book, the Incarnation of our Lord, his literal assumption of our human nature, raises the dignity of that nature, and forbids the Christian philosopher from following the path of the Platonist or the Manichee in his rejection of one-half of that nature. The Incarnation of our Lord consecrates the complete human nature, body and soul together, and gives that integral nature, so to say, a second charter. It was divine in its creation, it receives now a reaffirmation of that primeval sanction. Not only so, but the whole Christian dispensation as instituted by our Lord is incarnational, and is inspired throughout by this conception of an integral human nature, a complete unity of body and soul.

But especially does the Resurrection of our Lord himself, the central fact of the Gospel and the climax of his mission, enforce the doctrine of a true bodily resurrection. The Gospels all record this resurrection, and it is the resurrection of his identical body in true physical reality. When our Lord appeared to his disciples in the evening of the first Easter Day, Saint Luke tells us that they were troubled and afraid, supposing that they saw a spirit. But Jesus, to convince them that it was really himself, in perfect physical reality, said to them: "See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. But while they yet believed not and wondered for joy, he said: Have you here anything to eat? And they offered him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honeycomb. And when he had eaten before them, taking the remains he gave to them." (Luke 24:39-43) A like demonstration of the physical reality of our Lord's Resurrection is given by Saint John: "He shewed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20) - that is, knew from this tangible proof that it was really he. And, for Saint Thomas: "Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered: My Lord, and my God." (John 20:27,28)

If it be said of this that our Lord's Resurrection is a thing apart and bears no relation to ours, it is answered that the New Testament does not regard it so. To Saint Paul our Lord's Resurrection is the exemplary type and the guarantee of ours. The Resurrection of our Lord figured so largely in the preaching of the apostles, (see Acts, passim) not only because it was the supreme proof of Christ's mission, but also because it was itself a book of doctrine, throwing a clear light upon the eternal destiny of man.

The Testimony of Saint Paul

Passing now from the Gospels to consider the teaching of Saint Paul, it is proper to point out in the first place that his Epistles represent the belief of the first generation of the Christian Church. Some of the Epistles are earlier than the earliest of the Gospels, and their testimony has therefore a special value. Saint Paul claims to represent fully the mind of Christ, and the elaborate attempts of Protestant criticism to construct a Pauline Christianity alien from Christ's teaching have been singularly unsuccessful. Concerning this special doctrine of the resurrection of the body, Saint Paul's teaching is particularly explicit - it was for this in particular that he incurred the hostility of his compatriots - and we shall now consider his teaching in detail.

Saint Paul places the general resurrection on the same level of certainty as Christ's Resurrection: "If Christ be preached that he rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again, then is our preaching vain and your faith also is vain." (1 Corinthians 15:12) He preached the resurrection of the dead as one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity before the quick-witted Athenians, and by his teaching aroused their special interest. (Acts 17) The same doctrine formed part of his discourse at Jerusalem, (Acts 23) of his preaching before Felix, (Acts 24) and before Agrippa. (Acts 26) He insists on it often in his Epistles. (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philemon, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy) And it is clear that he intended a real bodily resurrection. If we would have his clearest and fullest exposition of the doctrine, it is to our hand in the "classic source," which has already been cited, the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. So clear, indeed, and full is the exposition of the doctrine in that chapter, that it must be given a detailed notice.

As has been observed already, Saint Paul argues the doctrine of our resurrection from the fact of the Resurrection of Christ, teaching that the two beliefs stand or fall together:

> "Now if Christ be preached that he rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have given testimony against God, that he hath raised up Christ, whom he hath not raised up if the dead rise not again. For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (12-19).

See how close he makes the connexion between Christ's Resurrection and ours - so close that we may fairly argue that in Saint Paul's mind our resurrection was to be not only as real as Christ's, but also as complete; that it was in its own measure to be like to Christ's, in being a complete resurrection of the whole man, body and soul.

Proceeding with his argument, Saint Paul indicates that death was the punishment of original sin, and that the resurrection is one of the fruits of Christ's redemption.

> "But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep. For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also. in Christ all shall be made alive" (20-22).

And now we may pass to that part of his argument where he undertakes to define the manner of the resurrection. Although we cannot, if we deny the resurrection of the body, speak properly of any resurrection at all - for the continued existence of the soul is not to be called a resurrection - yet there are those who use words thus and who would interpret "resurrection of the dead" in a purely spiritual sense. We may expect, then, that when Saint Paul

addresses himself to the explanation of the manner of the resurrection, he will give us the means of deciding this question. This is the way in which he approaches the problem:

> "But some man will say: how do the dead rise again? or with what manner of body shall they come? Senseless man, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be; but bare grain, as of wheat, or of some of the rest. But God giveth it a body as he will: and to every seed its proper body" (35-38).

Saint Paul begins with an analogy from nature, The apparent death of the seed, and then its manifest resurrection into the new life of the plant or tree, provide us with an illustration of man's resurrection from the grave. The analogy has been a favourite one with all writers on the resurrection, and we find it developed by them with great elaboration. It is clear already that Saint Paul is supposing a real continuity and identity of nature between the dead man and his risen self. But he passes on from this introductory analogy to come to closer grips with the question. God gives this human seed its proper body, as he gives its appropriate body to the acorn or the grain of wheat; but of what nature, in the case of man, is the body which he gives? It is not, says Saint Paul, just the natural body which he had in this world, but a spiritual body. Does he mean by this to empty "body" of all meaning? Assuredly not. We shall see later what are the special characteristics of the risen body and how this may be called a spiritual body. Yet it remains body none the less. Here are Saint Paul's words:

> "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body. . . . In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on

> incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy victory: O death where is thy sting?" (42-44,52-55)

Such is the final testimony of Saint Paul. It will rise a body - he does not cast aside that word - but a body which is spiritual, glorious, powerful, incorruptible, immortal. Had Saint Paul intended any mere immortality of spirit, was this the way in which to inculcate such a doctrine? "*It* is sown in corruption; it shall rise in incorruption," and so throughout his argument. What is this mortal that puts on immortality, and this corruptible that puts on incorruptibility, but the real human body? We may fairly summarize his faith under two main heads, The first is this: that there will be a real bodily resurrection of men, and that in their own bodies. The second is this: that this bodily resurrection is not to be conceived in a crude and material manner, but that the risen body is, as later theology puts it, a "glorified" body. It should be noted also that Saint Paul fixes the time of this resurrection: it is to be at the last judgement.

Here, then; we have the *locus classicus* for the doctrine; nowhere else in the New Testament is it so explicitly stated. Nor can it be claimed that Saint Paul's words teach no more than a "spiritual" resurrection. Such an interpretation is precluded by two considerations. In the first place, as has been indicated already, we must take account of the meaning which the resurrection of the dead would bear for his hearers. There is no hint that Saint Paul was teaching any new kind of resurrection, and he emphatically correlates our resurrection with the true bodily Resurrection of Christ. In the second place, if we admit this "‘spiritual" interpretation, we shall have to conclude that the Church from its earliest days embraced an erroneous doctrine, and that it has been obstinate and pertinacious in error for the twenty centuries of its existence. This conclusion cannot be harmonized with our Lord's promise that he would be with his Church "all days, even unto the consummation of the world," nor with his assurance that the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

But it may be objected further that the teaching of the New Testament, whatever its purport, is certainly not so precise and detailed as the teaching of later theology. The objection is true, but unimportant; for the precision of later theology adds nothing to the substance of the doctrine, but is occupied in defining its circumstances and consequences. It is to be remembered that scientific theology was yet far distant when Saint Paul wrote, and, on the other hand, that exact formulation does not imply distortion or misrepresentation. It is to be remembered also that the written documents of the New Testament do not contain, or profess to contain, a complete and scientific account of the Christian revelation. The Church existed before any part of the New Testament was written, and the Church possessed already and was already teaching the revelation committed to her by her Founder. The Church has never intermitted this teaching office. From her, as from one who lived with Christ and whose continuity of life has never through all the centuries suffered interruption, we learn the full teaching of Christ. She speaks as one having authority to teach. The testimonies from the New Testament which have been adduced in this chapter receive from her their full explanation and exposition, and her teaching is the true canon of their interpretation.

* * *

Little now remains to be said about the witness of the Scriptures, and this chapter may end with that vision of the resurrection which is given in the last book of the New ‘Testament. The Seer of the Apocalypse "saw a great white throne, and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them: and they were judged every one according to their works." (Apocalypse 20:11-13)

The Testimony of Tradition

The tradition of the Church - so far as it is a written tradition - is embodied in the Creeds, in the decrees of the Councils, in the sacred liturgy, and in the consentient teaching of the Fathers and the theologians. Upon this subject of the resurrection of the body the witness of tradition is so abundant, that to assemble it would require not a volume but a library. The present chapter will attempt only the briefest of summaries.

* * *

The most ancient document of the faith is undoubtedly the familiar statement of belief which is denominated the "Apostles' Creed." This creed was probably first formulated in Rome in the first century of Christianity for use in the ritual of baptism. The exact date of its composition cannot be determined precisely, but it has been traced back to the end of that first century, and we are free to hold that it is, what its title implies, of apostolic date and origin. The early Church in Rome was Greek-speaking, and this Creed in its earliest form was therefore in Greek. Now it is important to observe that here, at the earliest point at which we can test tradition, our doctrine is expressed in the most explicit and unquestionable form. For this earliest Creed expressed the doctrine in two Greek words of which the exact Latin equivalent is *carnis resurrectionem*, and the English "resurrection of the flesh." There is no ambiguity here, but a plain and explicit assertion of the bodily resurrection. Tradition, therefore, at its earliest point, is clear and unmistakable.

Besides the Apostles' Creed, the Church recognizes two others as of primary authority, those known as the Nicene and Athanasian respectively. It is unnecessary for our purpose to discuss the history of these Creeds, and we shall be content to give their evidence for our doctrine. The Nicene Creed says: "And I look for the resurrection of the dead." This Creed, in the form in which it is used in the Mass, is supposed to date from the Second Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in A.D. 381. It will be observed that the formula is not so clear and unmistakable as that of the Apostles' Creed, but there is no ground for supposing that it may be

understood in any different sense. Whatever truth there may be in the hypothesis that the vaguer expression was chosen under the influence of Origenist teaching - a mere hypothesis - the article did not in fact suffer any change of meaning, but was understood by the Church throughout in one and the same sense. If any proof were needed of - this, it would be sufficient to point to the fact that the Apostles' Creed maintained its position alongside the Nicene, its "resurrection of the flesh" marching harmoniously with the Nicene "resurrection of the dead"; nor is there the least evidence that the Church recognized any difference of meaning in the two formulas.

The third of the three primary Creeds is that which goes by the name of the "Athanasian" (fourth or fifth century). In this Creed, again, the doctrine is presented in unmistakable form. Christ our Lord, affirms the Creed, is to come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming "all men are to rise again with their own bodies."

Confirming the witness of these Creeds is the Canon of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, A.D. 553) condemning the opinion of Origen that the risen body shall be "ethereal and spherical" and that neither Christ our Lord nor men shall have material bodies.

Leaving these Creeds and passing from the era of the Ecumenical Councils, we reach the Eleventh Council of Toledo (A.D. 675) and the explicit pronouncement: "We confess the resurrection of the flesh of all the dead. And we believe that we shall rise again, not in any ethereal or different flesh (as some, have foolishly supposed), but in this flesh in which we live and move and are." The Creed of Pope Leo IX (A.D. 1050), still used in the ritual for the consecration of bishops, says: "I believe in the true resurrection of that same flesh which I now bear." The Profession of Faith prescribed by Pope Innocent III for converts from the errors of the Waldenses (A.D. 1210) has the clause: "We believe with the heart and profess with. the mouth the resurrection of this flesh which we bear and not of any other." And, most definite of all, the Fourth Lateran Council (A.D. 1215), in its decree against the Albigenses and other heretics, declares that men "shall all rise again with their own bodies, which they now bear, to receive according to their works."

There is no need to produce further evidence from Creed or

Council. The doctrine is clear and unmistakable: the true resurrection of all men in true bodies.

When we pass to the witness of the Fathers and theologians we are met with such an abundance of testimony for this particular doctrine that it is very difficult to represent it at all in a brief summary. All that shall be attempted here is to give a few examples of traditional teaching at widely different dates in the Church's history.

At the very beginning and before the era of the apologists, we have Saint Clement of Rome (who died about A.D. 99) in his Epistle to the Corinthians teaching the doctrine quite explicitly, basing it on the authority of Scripture, on the example of our Lord's Resurrection, and on some curious analogies from natural history. The Epistle of Saint Polycarp to the Philippians, as also the authentic Acts of his martyrdom (A.D. 155), provide further testimony. But we are now in the second century and the era of the first - Christian apologists. The philosopher and martyr Saint Justin in, his *First Apology* thus states the Christian faith: "We expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth, for we maintain that with God nothing is impossible." He expects, we may note, a literal bodily substance.

The apologist Athenagoras (¢. A.D. 180) devoted a special treatise to the resurrection, and goes very thoroughly into the matter. In him we meet the famous problem that was afterwards to exercise the minds of the Scholastics: What if certain particles of matter have served several persons? He is content to appeal to the omnipotence of God.

We come next to the testimony of Saint Irenaeus, and it is testimony of the first importance. Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor, and had when young seen and heard the martyr Saint Polycarp, himself a disciple of Saint John. He is thus closely linked with the apostolic age, and as one born in the East, familiar with the Church in Rome, and then Bishop of the great Christian see of Lyons, he had an exceptional acquaintance with the Church of this day. His teaching may be safely regarded as representative of the faith of the Church in the second century. Unfavourable critics describe it as "materialistic," a very literal raising again of the flesh. Such, then,

was the belief of the Church in the second century. Out of very many passages that might be quoted from Irenaeus, here is one brief sample of his teaching:

"Just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as a corn of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold - increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of men, and having received the Word of God becomes the Eucharist; which is the body and blood of Christ; so also our bodies, being nourished by it and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at the appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God, even the Father, - who freely gives to this mice immortality, and to this corruption incorruption." (*Adversus Haereses*, Book V, c. 2.)

Passing over the emphatic witness of Tertullian and the doubtful speculations of Origen, it is sufficient to say that the recognized theologians both of East and West in the succeeding centuries, such men as Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Epiphanius, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Saint Ambrose, Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, devote themselves to the exposition and defence of the othodox belief in a bodily resurrection. From Saint Augustine alone enough might be quoted to form a treatise on the doctrine; but there is really no need to assemble this abundant witness. There is no question that the Fathers of the Church, with complete unanimity, teach the true resurrection of the body.

* * *

When we turn to the scholastic theologians we find that they accept this orthodox teaching and discuss its implications with elaborate care. Saint Thomas Aquinas, for instance, devotes to it thirteen Questions of his *Summa Theologica* (Suppl., QQ. 75-87.) and eleven chapters of his *Summa contra Gentiles*. (Lib. IV, cc. 79-89.) The modern critic recognizes in this exposition, and in that of the scholastic theologians generally; a complete acceptance of the traditional belief; his only complaint is that these theologians discuss the implications of the resurrection with a too elaborate nicety. However that may be, a quotation from the first Article of Saint Thomas's first Question (Suppl., Q.75.) will show clearly the

nature of his belief. After setting forth some objections to the doctrine he proceeds as follows:

"But against (these objections) is the text of Job: 'I know that my redeemer liveth and in the last day I shall rise from the earth and again be clothed in my skin,' etc. Therefore there will be a bodily resurrection. Furthermore, the gift of Christ is greater than the sin of Adam, as is clear from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. But death was introduced by sin, for if there had been no sin, there would have been no death; therefore by the gift of Christ man shall be restored again from death to life. Furthermore, the members of Christ's mystical body ought to be comformable to the Head. But our Head lives and shall for ever live in body and soul, because 'Christ rising from the dead dieth now no more' (Romans 6:9). Therefore men also, who are his members, shall live in body and soul. And so there must be a resurrection of the flesh.

"I reply generally that the opinions of those who affirm or deny this resurrection vary with their views on man's last end. The last end of man is happiness. Now some have maintained that a man can attain this end in this life, and so they were under no necessity to posit another life after this in which a man should attain his final perfection. They therefore denied the resurrection. . . . Others have required another life after this, in which man should live after death, but in his soul only; and they held that this soul life was sufficient to meet the natural desire of happiness. . . . And so they also denied the resurrection. For this opinion some had one false reason, others another. Certain heretics, for instance, held that all bodily things were from an evil principle, and spiritual things from a good principle. Wherefore the soul could not attain blessedness unless it was separated entirely from body. So all those heretical sects, who believe bodily things were created or formed by the devil, deny the resurrection. We have shown the falsity of this fundamental theory elsewhere. Others again have held that the soul was the whole man and the body a mere instrument which the soul employed, as a sailor uses a ship. And so with them too the man is perfectly blessed if his soul is blessed. Therefore they also had no use for the resurrection. But their opinion is refuted by Aristotle, when he shows that the soul is the form of the body, and is united to it as form is united to matter. And so it is evident, that if a man

cannot attain beatitude in this life, we must necessarily assume the resurrection."

In the specific answers to objections with which he concludes the article, Saint Thomas argues (*inter alia*) that man is a real unity of body and soul; no fortuitous or accidental compound; that all his deeds are the deeds of this unitary agent; and that therefore the complete man, both body and soul, should receive the meed that his deeds have earned. And further, that the soul's state is more perfect when it is in the body, because it belongs to a whole of which the body also is an integral part; that this is its nature as assigned to it by God; and that therefore it is more conformable to God, more fully in his likeness, when it is united to the body.

With this brief extract in illustration of the teaching of Saint Thomas, this chapter may conclude. The evidence of tradition is overwhelmingly plain and does not need further emphasis. Creeds, Councils, Fathers, Liturgy: all these agree in proclaiming the doctrine in the literal sense. The ancient belief of the Church in the bodily Assumption of the Mother of God stands out as a practical affirmation of it. And such as was the doctrine to Saint Irenaeus, to Saint Augustine, to Saint Thomas, such is it to the Catholic Church of the present day. With the modern tendency outside the Church to interpret it in a "spiritual" fashion she has no sympathy. She would belie her claim to divine guidance were she thus to reverse the teaching of the centuries.

In the Same Bodies

Hitherto these chapters have dealt with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in a general way, setting forth its meaning and reasonableness, and assembling the scriptural and traditional evidence for it. It has been seen that the doctrine implies no mere immortality of the soul; or persistence of personal life in some purely spiritual mode of existence, but a real and complete resurrection of man in the fulness of his nature. It has been seen that only such a rising again can properly be called a resurrection, and that reason persuades this redintegration of the human whole. But nothing has been said so far about a matter which would seem to be of great importance in the interpretation of the doctrine - viz., the question of the identity of the risen body. The voice of tradition appears to be unanimous in favour of a very literal identity of material substance. The texts have been assembled in the previous chapters, and all, it would seem, are of the same tenor as the profession, which every Catholic bishop has to make in his consecration: "I believe in the true resurrection of that same flesh which I now bear." What do these formularies mean? What are we by the rule of faith required to believe regarding this point? Certainly; and obviously, the formularies imply that there is a relation of identity between the earthly and the risen body. But what sort of identity? That is the question.

For there are; among Catholic theologians, two rival views on this matter. There is the classical view, the view of the vast majority of the theologians, which maintains a real identity of bodily substance; and there is the view of a minority, which regards such material identity as unnecessary. Both parties agree, of course, that there is complete identity of soul; and both parties agree that the soul is the "predominant partner" and is the chief factor in the determination of personal identity. But while the minority would make it the sole factor and effective cause of personal identity, the majority require along with it a coefficient of identical material substance. Let us illustrate the matter from ordinary human life.

A man preserves, throughout his life, his personal identity. That identity rests, in the first place, on identity of soul. The conscious

life, knit together by memory, is continuous from. beginning to end, and the man himself recognizes in this continuous experience his identity with himself. But such *spiritual identity* is not the whole of the matter, just as man is not a pure spirit, but a being composed of body and soul. So that there is also a psycho-physical identity, based on the life of the senses and on every vital process of the organism. Let us call this, to distinguish it from the other, *vital identity*. It is true, of course, that the soul vitalizes and controls the whole human energy, and yet it will be useful here to distinguish between. purely spiritual activity and the mixed activities of the human complex. We recognize, then, in a living man, not merely an identity of soul, but an identity of his complete self, an identity not only in the functions of his mind, but in every function of his sensitive organism. Physiologists say that the substance of which the body is composed is continually changing, and Saint Thomas Aquinas also recognizes a constant flux of matter. But it is a plain fact of experience that this process, however constant and however complete, does not interrupt the vital identity. Though atoms and molecules may change, yet the unitary life persists, and the organism goes on uninterruptedly to the dissolution of death, preserving a continuous vital identity, while apparently wholly indifferent to the material "stuff" which it now appropriates and now discards.

Thus there are spiritual identity and vital identity, these two being in effect in the human life no more than distinct aspects of the same force. But, of the two, that which we call vital identity is the more characteristically human. For we are not disembodied spirits, or spirits using a physical mechanism in a merely external and instrumental way. On the contrary, the spiritual principle is enmeshed in a complex train of sense activity. The soul functions thus in the sense organism, and it is intimately and necessarily conjoined with it. Moreover, in each man as he lives his life, it is not any pure activity of soul that distinguishes him from his fellows, but rather this manifold psychophysical activity. He is born with a sense life and already with certain characters which. distinguish him from his fellows. The cells which form his body, in their mysterious and wonderful fashion, strive towards and achieve a living structure which is original and unique. A vital formula or pattern dominates the process. And then the man acquires further

characteristics, and the experience of life registers itself upon his organism, as well as in his memory. And so. we get the unique person of unmistakable individuality, unique not only in the outward and visible features of his body, not only in the central life of the spirit, but in every pulsation of his vital energy. Such an identity and continuity of bodily life is a matter of everyday experience. To the scientist who knows nothing of soul, this vital energy in its manifold manifestations is all that he understands by life, and he. recognizes fully this vital identity.

But there is conceivable yet a third component of personal identity, which we may be allowed to call *atomic identity*. Natural science, it is true, has discovered elements more ultimate than the atom, and even the latest ultimates, proton and electron, now find their position threatened; but *atomic identity* will serve to convey what we intend, an identity of material substance.

For though the substance of our bodies is in constant flux, and though the organism would appear to be indifferent to the stuff which it uses, yet this change and alteration in our material composition is not catastrophic and instantaneously complete, but gradual and piecemeal. A man does not suddenly change his whole material substance. Take him at periods wide apart and there may be no atomic identity whatever, although this is one of those assertions which are far from proven. But even if we grant that the boy has no atomic identity with the man, or that our bodies - according to the current opinion - change entirely in a space of seven years, this does not dispose of the necessity of atomic identity i in the personal life. For that life is a continuous process, and the material transformation is continuous also. It is not sudden and abrupt, but gradual. So that we cannot say that atomic identity, because of this flow of matter, has nothing to do with a man's personal identity. On the contrary, it would appear more reasonable to suppose that this identity makes its contribution to the complete human identity. And such is the spontaneous view of common sense; which, while quite ready to accept the metabolism of the physiologist, yet is not disturbed in its belief that there is a real continuity of material substance. The fire of life is passed on from day to day, until it is extinguished in death. And if the torch which carries that fire - the human body - is from day to day repaired and

renewed by a marvellous vital chemistry, yet it remains really one and the same to the end of the race.

Such is human identity, not a thing of soul life alone; nor of soul and sense life, but the complex product of three: of soul and sense and body.

Now this is the sort of identity which the majority of theologians suppose to obtain in the resurrection. They point to the fact that - the resurrections recorded in the Gospels were of this sort: the widow's son of Naim, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus. Each of these rose from death to life in a body which had this full identity with the body of his previous life. And our Lord's Resurrection, which is the model of ours, was just such a resurrection, in his own body in the full sense of identity. The theologians do not suppose that there need be any absolute atomic identity, because such a condition is not verified in the successive stages of the earthly life. But they ask for such an identity as is certainly characteristic of the earthly life. They suppose that God will make good any defects in the body and remedy all imperfection. They conjecture that all men will rise again in the age of perfect youth, so that a child will be brought forward to this and an old man back. But in this process they believe that God will make use of the material substance which has been the man's in his earthly life. There is no need that he should use all of this, nor is there any objection, where such substance is lacking, to its being supplied from elsewhere. For exact material identity is not necessary. Ferrariensis, commenting on Saint Thomas's *Contra Gentiles*, speaks thus of this identity: "A man remains one and the same man throughout his life on account of a numerical identity of form (the soul) and on account of some identity of matter. For though there is continual change in his material constituents, yet there remains always some matter in hand to which the new is added. And so it is with the risen body. If by God's power there be given to this some substance that was lacking, yet absolutely and simply speaking the man remains one and the same, though he may be considered as different in an accidental way because of this foreign substance." (On *Contra Gentiles*, IV 81.)

And the theologians maintain this theory of identity, not because

they suppose that the matter which may have formed our bodies retains in itself any natural inclination to one human body rather than another, but because they believe that God wishes our resurrection to have this completeness. It is his will, and he has the power to carry it out. Nor is it more difficult for ‘him to raise in identical bodies those who have been dead for centuries, and whose bodies have long been dissolved into dust, than it was so to raise Lazarus or the son of the widow of Naim. And they believe that God wills this sort of resurrection, because it appears to them that the documents of the faith, Scripture and tradition, persuade this resurrection and no other. It is not necessary again to refer to these documents, for they have been assembled in previous chapters, but the reader will admit that this teaching regarding the identity of the risen body is the apparent meaning of the very explicit conciliar decrees, as for example the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council which declares that men "shall all rise again with their own bodies which they now bear, to receive according to their works."

But it is argued by the theologians who do not accept this view that the decrees of the Councils are patient of another interpretation. It is urged that these definitions are concerned primarily with the reality of the bodily resurrection as against those who either denied this resurrection outright, or contended for such a "spiritual" body as emptied the doctrine of meaning; but that they do not give unquestionable and decisive testimony regarding the identity of the risen body. It is true that they use such phrases as "that same flesh which I now bear," and that these phrases seem plain enough; but they may be interpreted, it is urged, not of identity, but of similarity of flesh, as asserting, that is (in scholastic terms), not a numerical, but a specific identity. Such is the argument. However, if we compare these definitions with the teaching of tradition in the Fathers and schoolmen, it would appear that the plain meaning of the formularies is the true one. Some of this teaching has already been cited, but we may here assemble a few definite and explicit sentences.

Saint Justin Martyr says: "We expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth, for we maintain that with God nothing is impossible." Athenagoras says: "It is impossible for the same man to be reconstituted unless the same

bodies are restored to the same souls." Tertullian teaches that the particles of the body, wherever they may be, will be collected again and the man's proper body thus reproduced. Moreover, when the apologists grapple with the famous problem of the cannibal, the son of cannibals, we get plain evidence of their belief that identity of bodily substance was required for the resurrection.

Again, the Fathers (e.g., Saint Jerome) commonly point to our Lord's Resurrection in an identical body as the type of our resurrection. As was the resurrection of the Head, so shall the resurrection of the members be. Our Lord was at pains to demonstrate to his disciples the reality of his body, and he showed that it was that body which had suffered and died for us. Our resurrection shall be like to his, in those bodies with which we have lived in the world, and with which we have merited either reward or punishment.

The weighty witness of Saint Augustine is entirely on the side of this bodily identity. He argues that it is not necessary that the material of which the body has been composed should in the reconstitution of the body occupy the same parts and perform the same functions as before. But he is quite clear that the body will be reconstituted from the same material. He likens the process to the melting down and recasting of a metal statue. All the metal is used again, and the new statue is identical in material with the original one, but the material is bound to be "shuffled" in the process and so differently arranged.

When we turn from the Fathers to the Scholastics we find no difference of belief. Saint Thomas discusses the point with considerable care and pronounces definitely for the resurrection of an identical body. (Suppl., Q. 79; *Contra Gentiles*, IV 81.) After discussing Platonic and Pythagorean views regarding the relation and fate of soul and body, and pronouncing these and all similar views contrary to the teaching of Scripture, he affirms that the resurrection, since it means "rising again," demands that the soul return to the same body. If the soul does not return to the same body, then we ought not to speak of resurrection, but rather call the fact the assumption of a new body.

In his *Summa contra Gentiles* Saint Thomas considers at greater

length the objections to this manner of conceiving the resurrection of the body. One objection is that, if this be true, we must suppose that all matter that has at any time belonged to a man must rise with him, so that he would be of a portentous magnitude. Another is that some men have - no other food than human flesh, and beget children who also eat this food. So several men will have a right to the same flesh. Saint Thomas is not dismayed by these objections. Pointing to the fact of metabolism in the earthly life and the continual change that takes place in the material substance of the body, he argues that a man preserves his identity of body in spite of this flux and reflux of its elements: "What does not bar numerical identity in a man while he lives on uninterruptedly can clearly be no bar to the identity of the risen man with the man that - was." So there is no need to suppose that the risen body must have all the matter that has belonged at any time to the man; it is sufficient that it have as much of it as will make a perfect body, repairing loss or mutilation and perfecting the aged or the immature. To the second objection he answers that it is based on the same false supposition, that a man must receive again all the matter that has ever been his. He adds that, if there should be any lack of bodily matter, we may trust God to supply the deficiency.

It is abundantly clear from these citations - which could be multiplied indefinitely - that traditional teaching favours a real identity of bodily substance. It might indeed be urged against this conclusion that the Fathers and Scholastics, had they possessed our modern knowledge of the constitution and behaviour of matter, would have spoken differently. But that is a rather doubtful supposition. For in the course of their arguments they faced objections which anticipated the difficulties of the scientist, and they were not turned away thereby from their insistence on corporeal identity. To all such objections they were content at the last to oppose the omnipotence of God as the all-sufficient solution. Nor is the attitude of the generality of modern theologians any different.

Objections and Another View

But if the resurrection of the body seems to the modern objector a hard doctrine, the resurrection of an identical body seems to him quite impossible and incredible. Indeed, it may be said, roughly speaking, that most of the "scientific" objections brought against the doctrine are objections to the theory of material identity; and concern this special aspect of the doctrine, rather than the doctrine in itself. The difficulty is not in any sense a new one, for it was evidently felt in - every period of the history of the doctrine. But since the modern objections as they are commonly stated appear to many to persuade another view of the resurrection, and since such a view has been propounded, this chapter must set forth some of these objections, the view in question, and the general theological criticism of the whole.

The chief objections to the theory of material identity may be reduced to three and stated as follows. The first objection is based upon what may be denominated the indifference of the atom. It is not an objection of great weight, for the theologians are quite prepared to admit this indifference, and they set the determining cause that requires material identity not in matter but in God. Yet since this objection is urged and is plausible, let it be here set down. Our bodies, then, are composed of atoms of various elements: carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, etc., in various number and proportion. These atoms are taken up into the cell life, are controlled by what may be called the psycho-physical formula of each individual man, and thus the individual, living body is formed. But of themselves these atoms have no personal characteristics or differences whatever. One atom of carbon is exactly like another atom of carbon, and one atom of nitrogen exactly like another atom of nitrogen and so on. (We refrain from carrying the analysis as far as the further ultimates, the proton and electron, though the absence of differentiating character becomes there more evident still.) Therefore when the body dies and the cell life is extinct, there would seem to be no satisfactory ground whatever for identifying any particular atoms with any particular body. It would seem, therefore, to be a matter of indifference what atoms were chosen to form the material substance of the risen body. And so the theory of

material identity would seem unnecessary. And if miracles should not be multiplied without cause, why insist on this atomic identity?

The second objection is based on the doctrine of the incessant circulation of matter. The particles of matter of which our bodies are composed, it is alleged, have previously belonged to other bodies. And this matter is now, and has been from the beginning, in constant circulation. As the theologian Billot quaintly expresses it, this is a process *per quam ex quolibet quidlibet fit, et rursus quidlibet transit in quodlibet.*

Moreover, since man appeared on the earth untold generations have lived and died, and the question of property in particular atoms of matter has been rendered infinitely complex. And then there is the ancient, yet not unreal objection, based on the practice of cannibalism. So, in the general resurrection, it is asked, how can this universal problem of disputed ownership be settled?

And a third objection, which is really a particular case of the last, points to that metabolism which is an admitted phenomenon of the individual bodily life. The physiologists do not allow any constant material identity in the living man. To them the fundamental fact of life is the incessant transformation of living substance. Life, they say, is constant decomposition and reconstruction. 'There is really no stability of material substance, and therefore no such thing as material identity. My body today may be substantially the same as what it was last week; but it is wholly different, in its material constituents, from the body which I had some years ago. So that it would appear that a genuine identity of bodily life in this world does not require any such material identity. Why, then, insist upon it in the resurrection?

Such are some of the objections raised against the theory of material identity. The general answer to them has already been made when it was said that all such difficulties will not be difficulties to the omniscience and omnipotence of God. And if we grant that the documents of revelation require such material identity, then there is nothing more to be said. But we may press these objections and refuse to make such appeal to God's power. To this the theologian would answer that all the difficulties may be reduced to one, namely to the supposed case where a man can

claim no material substance as his own, because it has previously belonged to others. This is the crucial question, and it is a difficulty which is almost as old as the doctrine. What is the solution? We may. either deny the probability of the hypothesis - certainly it cannot be shown to occur - or again we may leave the matter to God.

But some few theologians have met these difficulties in another way, and it is only fair to the reader that we should expound their view. It is rather an eccentric view and has not received great countenance among the general body of theologians; but it has been propounded both in the Middle Ages and - in our own day, and it therefore deserves mention. According to this view, then, we are wrong to insist on material identity of bodily substance. That may be characteristic of the resurrection, but it is entirely unnecessary. It is sufficient that there should be identity of soul. Such is the view propounded in the scholastic period by Durandus (died 1332), known from the quality of his temper and opinions as the Doctor Resolutissimus, and such is the view propounded in our own day by the distinguished Jesuit theologian and former Cardinal, Billot.

This opinion has the advantage that it destroys the force of the objections which have just been considered: they no longer apply. It is argued further, in its favour, that Saint Thomas himself pointed the way to this solution when he observed that a man preserved his numerical identity throughout his life, although the elements of his body were in a constant state of flux. From this Billot argues that the real principle of identity in a man, when we consider him at successive points in his life, is his soul and not the changing body; and therefore also in the resurrection the soul can provide all necessary identity. If it be said that this view is contrary to the plain sense of the formularies, Billot's answer is that they do not contradict it. What the formularies insist on is reality of bodily substance and not identity. They are concerned to condemn errors such as that of Origen, but not to insist upon atomic identity. They wanted to make sure of flesh, but not of this particular flesh. And, argues Billot, if their words are to be pressed so as to connote material identity, then this identity ought to be complete. What ground, he asks, is there for saying that there must be some identical matter, but not all? And if we adopt this complete material

identity, then all the old problems face us: With what body shall a man rise, for he has tenanted many in the course of his life. And what of the resurrection of cannibals?

But if we neglect this atomic identity and cease to pursue it, how much easier everything becomes. Even in the earthly life how unimportant it is compared with the vital identity of the animated organism. The personal identity of the living body, with all its vital endowment, depends very little, if at all, upon an identity of atomic substance. And shall we insist upon it for the risen body? That body will be identical with the earthly body with the vital identity of which we have spoken. When God raises up a living body in the resurrection, when he restores the bodily life, and sets up again the living organism, he does not restore any bodily life, a sort of standardized product; but he restores that personal and individual life which you had on earth and which was arrested by death. When the soul takes up that life again it returns to intimate union with a familiar vital organism, and does not start a fresh life in a new environment. Your organism with all its special characters and individual traits, with all its experience of life, and with its unique history and unique achievement as the partner of your soul: this is the living body that God will restore to you at your resurrection. And with this vital identity - a very true and genuine identity - why ask for a further and unimportant identity of atomic substance? You have not such identity in your earthly career, why demand it in the resurrection?

Such, in brief, is the argument of those who deprecate insistence on material or atomic identity, and prefer to hold that identity of soul is sufficient; for from soul identity flows that full vital identity which is proper to man. And, undoubtedly, their theory has its advantages. It is obvious that, by dispensing with a literal identity of bodily substance, it does remove some of the difficulties which are brought against the bodily resurrection. It is definitely an "easier" view; nor can we say that it is not a permissible view. But, if it is more acceptable to the scientist, it is not so attractive to the theologian. For it is not, in spite of all argument to the contrary, in harmony with the tradition. It is at best a forced interpretation of the language of the formularies. And, if our whole business in this matter is to interpret the tradition truly, then it would seem that we

must abandon this theory and hold to material identity. While as for the argument that material identity is not characteristic of the earthly life, this is untrue. For although the matter of the body is in constant process of change, yet there is a real continuity of material substance.

And so the view of Durandus and Billot, with all its advantages, has not been generally adopted and cannot be said to enjoy great favour among the theologians. It is true that some Scholastics have admitted the possibility of a resurrection in which there should be no material identity, but they have done so only by way of exception and hypothesis. The general attitude towards the view is well stated by Suarez:

> "Therefore, although that manner of imperfect resurrection imagined by Durandus may be conceived and understood as possible, yet the true resurrection; as the Scripture and the Church speak of it, requires an identity not only of soul, but also of body." (De mysteriis vitae Christi, Disp. 44.)

To the "scientific" difficulties which are alleged against material identity, it is answered that there is nothing very new about them. The difficulty arising out of the circulation of matter was contained, in a crucial form, in the old cannibal problem. Nor was Saint Thomas, for instance, unaware that the matter of our bodies is in a continual state of flux, and we may claim for him that he anticipated the metabolism of the physiologist.

So a man may well prefer to disregard these objections, reflecting that he has hardly any greater difficulties to face than those which were faced by the apologists, the Fathers and the Scholastics. And what was their general answer to all such objections? In its ultimate form it was simply this: that difficulties which seem to us with our limited knowledge and limited intelligence almost insuperable will be no difficulties to the omniscience and omnipotence of God. There is really nothing more to be said.

So that our conclusion is this: that, of the two modes of conceiving the true bodily resurrection, that more precise mode which requires some material identity is the one generally taught by the

theologians, and is the one which best accords with the tradition. It may be said further, in favour of this view, that this is the sort of bodily resurrection which the ordinary Christian man has always expected. Saint Thomas aptly expresses the attitude of the plain man when he says that if there be no material identity, we ought not to call the occurrence a resurrection of the body, but the assumption of a new body.

The Risen Body

This book has now dealt with the resurrection of the body and the manner of this resurrection; it remains to say something about the qualities of the risen body.

The subject is a highly speculative one, and there is very little certainty about it. We know that we shall rise again in true bodies, and that these bodies will be in some way spiritualized. So much is the teaching of Holy Scripture and tradition, and it is the faith of the Church; more than this is theological deduction and speculation. It may seem to some readers of this book that it is idle to attempt any further precision in this matter, and that it would be far better to abstain from speculation and abide by the grand, if mysterious, language of Saint Paul. But Catholic theologians in general and the schoolmen in particular have not so regarded the matter. And indeed, apart from the fact that the subject of itself provoked the scholastic temper to exercise its gift for metaphysical speculation, these theologians had a very practical purpose. For the doctrine of the resurrection had encountered from the earliest times a criticism which sought to empty the risen body of all corporeality. Origen, for example, so emphasized the spirituality of the risen body that he was understood to deny to it any bodily character. Hence the condemnation of the Fifth Ecumenical Council: "If anyone shall say that the future judgement signifies the total abolition of bodies, and that the end of the story is immateriality, and that there will be nothing material in the future world, but only naked mind: let him be anathema." (Canons against Origen, No. 11.)

Therefore the task before the Catholic theologian was to insist on the corporeal reality of the risen body, and at the same time to assert those spiritual characteristics which are proper to it in its glorified state. He had to construct such a theory of the glorious body as would preserve its bodily character and yet emphasize its. spiritual transformation. It is obviously an exceedingly difficult thing to do; and the theologians would not claim to have achieved it satisfactorily or finally. Let us consider their tentative conclusions.

To begin with we must note that although we shall be chiefly concerned - as was Saint Paul - with the bodies of the blessed, yet the wicked also rise again. The wicked too shall live for ever, though it be to be punished everlastingly. So the bodies of all men, both good and bad, are now immortal and incorruptible. But that which is the foundation of the blessedness of the good is the supreme torment of the wicked, that they shall know no respite in their pains. For the rest, apart from this attribute of incorruptibility, the bodies of the blessed and the wicked differ as glory from utter dishonour, as beauty from vileness, as joy from misery. Their very incorruptibility is, in Saint Augustine's phrase, an incorruptibility of continuous corruption.

Turning from their lamentable state to consider the condition of the blessed, we set it down as the fundamental quality of their bodies that they are now immortal and incorruptible. In this especially does the risen body differ from the earthly body. The earthly body is subject to change and corruption; the risen body is immutable and incorruptible. When the Sadducees confronted our Lord with difficulties against the resurrection, he answered them: "The children of this world marry and are given in marriage. But they that shall be accounted worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead shall neither marry nor take wives. Neither can they die, any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." (Luke 20:34-36) From these words of our Lord, reported also in Saint Matthew and Saint Mark, we see that the life of the world to come is not a repetition of the life of this world, and that the risen body is body with a difference. To those who think otherwise, "You err," says our Lord, "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." In the resurrection we become like unto the angels of God.

Starting, then, from these data, that we have true bodies and that these bodies are now immortal and quasi-angelic, and basing their exposition upon Saint Paul's description in First Corinthians, the Scholastics attribute to the risen body four chief qualities - namely, impassibility, clarity, agility and subtlety. Let us consider these separately, and first the quality of impassibility.

We have already said that immortality is the first essential

characteristic of the glorified state and that it is intrinsic and fundamental. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Following directly from this quality, and indeed hardly more than an aspect of it, is the quality of impassibility. By this it is meant' that all defect is excluded from the glorified body. Incorruption reigns supreme, and the forces of corruption, waste and change have no more power. From this it follows that all the activities of generation and nutrition, or whatever others are bound up with the nature of a mortal and passible body, are excluded from the glorified body. Saint Thomas says that the risen body is perfectly subject to the soul and the soul to God. The body, therefore, is assimilated to the nature of the soul and shares its impassibility: it is as the angels of God.

We may revolt against this doctrine as contradicting all our conceptions of the nature of "body," of which constant change, waste and repair, seem necessary characteristics. Yet we know very little of the real nature of body and its inherent possibilities; and we know less of the power of God. But here is the explicit doctrine, imparting to us a piece of divine knowledge, and from this doctrine the impassibility of the risen body is a necessary deduction.

In connexion with this quality we may refer briefly to the speculations of the Scholastics with regard to minor points. Saint Thomas lays it down that men and women will rise with bodies which are perfect in every member and every organ, although the functions of the physical life are no longer performed. If there were defects in the earthly body, these will be repaired in the risen body. And, furthermore, all will rise "in juvenili aetate," in the state of youth. The child who has died before attaining this state, and the old man who has passed through it to decrepitude: both alike will be established in the perfect age. And so they will remain, without change or alteration, immortal and impassible.

The second quality of the risen bode as precised by the Scholastics, is "clarity" - that is to say, beauty, glory and splendour. "It is sown in dishonour," says Saint Paul; it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it" shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body." Our bodies, he says, become celestial and possess the glory proper to the celestial. For "one is the glory of the

sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory." And even so our bodies, when risen and glorified, shall possess a proper glory and beauty. Of this glory we can say little. The soul enjoys the beatific vision, and that infinite beauty irradiates and transforms it. "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God hath prepared for them that love him." The glory possessed by the soul in the beatific vision overflows, says Saint Thomas, and transforms the body. "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43) Saint Thomas says that the glory of the soul shines through the body, even as a glass vessel shows the colour of that which is contained in it. So the whole body will be lightsome (*lucidum*), and display in every part the glory of the soul.

The third quality of the risen body is the quality of subtlety, by which is meant that the body, while remaining a true body, is yet assimilated to the spiritual soul, to which it is now utterly docile. "It is sown a natural body: it shall rise a spiritual body" - that is to say, like to a spirit; and this quality of subtlety is especially characteristic of spirit. Yet we must not, with some ancient heretics push the "rarefaction" of body so far as to abolish the distinction between body and spirit. Body cannot be transformed into spirit, however "subtle" it. may become. The risen body shall remain as true a body as was our Lord's when he said, "See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have. The risen body, says Saint Thomas, is subtle through completest perfection of bodily nature, and not through lack of that nature. And he derives this perfection from the dominance of the glorified soul over the body,. which is now entirely subject to it.

And we are not to think that this quality violates in any way the proper nature of body. Some theologians suppose that this subtlety enables the risen body to pass through other bodies, just as our Lord entered the room, "the doors being shut." But Saint Thomas regards this as a special exercise of divine power, as a miraculous event, and not as the natural behaviour of a glorified body. For he holds that the glorified body must still have dimensions and must still have its own exclusive locality. And not even two spirits, though

infinitely subtle, can be in the same place at one and the same time.

The fourth quality of the risen body, as specified by the theologians, is denominated "agility." By this is meant again that the body becomes a perfect instrument for the glorified soul. It is able to pass from place to place with great quickness, according to the will of the soul, and to move other bodies with a like velocity. "It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power." Saint Thomas here, as in the case of the other qualities, derives this agility from the perfect subjection of the risen body to its soul. The body becomes a perfect instrument, alert and quick to obey the spirit in all the activities of the blessed life.

Such, then, are the qualities of the risen body as expounded in theological speculation. There is no need to regard this exposition as exhaustive, or to claim for it any finality or absolute certainty. But some such speculation is certainly legitimate and no unreasonable illustration of the effort of faith to seek fuller understanding of its object. And let those note, who impute to the Catholic theology of the resurrection the character of crude materiality, that the whole effort and trend of this exposition is to emphasize the spirituality of the glorified body. The keynote of the whole teaching is the dominance of the risen soul over the whole man. In the. earthly life the spirit was trammelled and thwarted by its partner. There was a continual conflict. The balance of man's nature had been upset by original sin, and as a consequence he found "another law in his members fighting against the law of the spirit." But the effect of the resurrection, won for us by Christ our Lord, is to restore the integrity of human nature and to make the body the perfect instrument of the soul. If in the earthly life it was very really and unmistakably an animal body, subject to the necessities and the desires of the animal life, now it is as really and unmistakably a spiritual body, completely obedient to the soul and perfectly fulfilling its behests. In the life of glory, therefore, all conflict and friction have ceased. The soul now expresses itself in a perfect medium, and being most intimately one with the body and with every part of it, is able now, as never before, to exert its proper psychical energy to a degree only limited by the limitations of a finite being. It is here, in this enfranchisement of the soul's energy, in this enlargement and intensification of its power, that we

must find the dominant characteristic of the glorified state. And .the purpose of the qualities which have been specified above is no other than to depict and emphasize this dominance of spirit.

Let us say one word more about the potency of the glorified spirit and its efficiency in the glorified state. The glorified body, as has been said already, preserves every part and every organ of the earthly body. Yet cells and tissues and organs are to be conceived as maintaining their perfection without those processes of waste and repair, that metabolism, which is characteristic of the earthly organism. This is a hard saying, and what scientist can hear it? To justify it, we may be content to appeal to that omnipotent power which is the cause of the resurrection itself. But is it not possible also, short of invoking the omnipotence of God, to set forth this effect as the direct result of the dominance of spirit? Modern psychology has come back from its mechanistic wanderings to admit a real psychical force, a force which dominates and controls the material coefficients with which and through which it works. It is shy of using the word "soul," but none the less it has returned to a belief in some such thing. Now modern psychology on its experimental side has also made it more and more clear that the mind exercises a very powerful influence over the body. It has shown that this influence extends even to very profound modifications of the organism. The controlling influence of mind is clear even in the normal functioning of the organism, but it has become especially manifest in those abnormal states which have been elaborately studied by modern investigators, as in the phenomena of hysteria. We now know that there are many bodily affections which are mental in their origin and that they, yield to skilled treatment. The mind has the power to disturb and alter the physiological functions of the body, and it can produce all the material effects of genuine bodily disease. This power of mind is admitted by the psychologists.

Now if such is the power of mind in this life, if it so permeates and controls the bodily organism, what will be its power in the future life, when, according to our faith, the soul is raised to such a height of power and glory? It is a source of energy here and directs the body, though with difficulty and interruption; in the future life it will exercise a higher power, and will have no obstacles in its path.

This soul-action, therefore, this effective psychical energy, is to be conceived as the cardinal fact of the glorified life.

Nor should we omit another word about the effect of the "beatific vision" upon the glorified body. In the Gospel account of our Lord's Transfiguration we .read that he was "transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow." (Matthew 17:2) It is the traditional teaching of Catholic theology that this splendour was the normal quality of Christ's body. His human soul, by reason of its hypostatical union with the Eternal Word, enjoyed the beatific vision. But the connatural effect of this vision is the glorification, the transfiguration of the body. However, Christ as man, for the purposes of his Incarnation, restrained this effect, and once only, in his Transfiguration, allowed that glory to be seen.

So is it with the risen body as it was with the body of Christ in his Transfiguration. By virtue of the gift of glory the Blessed enjoy the beatific vision, and the power and splendour of the vision embrace not the soul only, but also the body. Saint Paul says: "We also beholding the glory of the Lord with open face are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

And now enough has been said about our doctrine. It will be abundantly evident that Catholic theology is wholly faithful to tradition. It insists on a genuine resurrection of body. It inculcates a complete view of human nature, and provides for a truly human immortality, an immortality of the whole human person. Firm in the faith once delivered to the saints, the Church looks forward confidently to a resurrection which is promised and prefigured in the Resurrection of her Lord.

About This EBook

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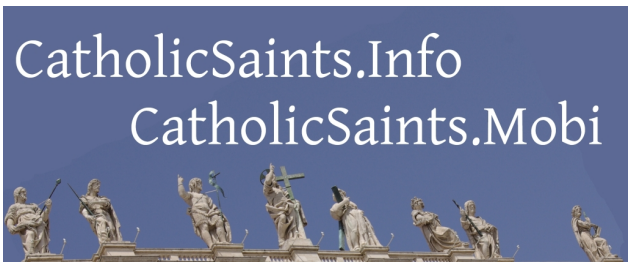
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